

<sup>5</sup> H. Vlieghe: 'The identity of the painter of the Cardiff Cartoons: a proposal', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 125 (1983), pp.350–56; and *idem*: 'The Cardiff Cartoons: Boeckhorst, after all', *ibid.* 129 (1987), pp.598–99.

<sup>6</sup> See G. Glück: *Rubens, Van Dyck und ihr Kreis*, Vienna 1933, pp.184, 186 and 341.

<sup>7</sup> The connection of these two fragments with the Munich *Family portrait* was first made in H. Vogel: *Katalog der Staatlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Kassel*, Kassel 1958, p.59, nos.99 and 100. Burchard also linked these works with the Munich painting; see Antwerp, Rubenianum, Box V17–204.

### Men from the Ministry. How Britain Saved Its Heritage.

By Simon Thurley.  
294 pp. incl. 106 b. & w. ills. (Yale University Press, London and New Haven, 2013),  
£18.99. ISBN 978-0-300-19572-9.

Reviewed by CHRIS MIELE

SIMON THURLEY, the Chief Executive of English Heritage, has two objectives in this book. First, he explains how the British state conserved the nation's heritage in the twentieth century; and, second, he makes a plea for government to take English Heritage more seriously. His 'men from the ministry' created what he calls the 'National Building Collection', the four hundred or so sites that have passed into the care of Thurley's successor organisation, English Heritage, a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The whole story of their work has not been told before. The cultural history of heritage has tended to focus on the efforts of individuals or voluntary groups, and most of the work to date has been on the nineteenth century. The far-sighted work of anonymous civil servants in the twentieth century is now here documented and fairly assessed. Although the narrative tends to be inward looking, there is enough contextual information to give the reader a feeling for the social profile of the early heritage industry.

The outstanding figure was Charles Peers, son of a clergyman, Cambridge educated, who then trained as an architect in the office of the architect-scholar T.G. Jackson. Peers became Inspector of Ancient Monuments at the Office of Works in 1910, and from within it created the Ancient Monuments Department. Here was the first cadre of heritage administrators paid for out of general taxation and accountable to a minister of state. The Ancient Monuments Act 1913 and subsequent legislation made it easier for them to take buildings into guardianship.

Before the regulatory system we have today, the British state's only real chance of preserving even the most precious site was to buy it. The pace of acquisition grew steadily between the wars. The legislative framework made it possible to compel private owners to preserve historic buildings, but there was no real appetite for it. Surprisingly, government continued to fund acquisitions in the austere years following the Second World War,

including country houses. For a time the men from the ministry looked as though they would get the better of the National Trust and its country-house scheme, and the examples of collaboration, and competition, between the two makes for interesting reading. Along the way the men from the ministry developed sophisticated techniques, cultivating, educating and entertaining the public. The service was entrepreneurial, creative and innovative, quite the reverse in fact from the sober image projected in the title.

The book's second aim is more polemical. Years of Tory cuts have hurt English Heritage. They came after a longer period of, as some would have it, New Labour's marginalisation of heritage. What really stings is just how badly Thurley's organisation has fared in successive financial settlements in comparison with our national galleries and museums. Why, Thurley wonders, has painting come to be seen as the supreme expression of visual culture, a situation that would have 'bewildered our ancestors'. This is possible, but art historians do not make public policy. And the comparison he draws between the National Gallery and the National Building Collection is very weak. Paintings are chattels and buildings are real estate, with commodity and social value, applied not fine art.

The occasion for this book is the radical remaking of English Heritage. At the time of writing (September 2013), government is proposing to hive off English Heritage's property-owning function into a separate body, something like the National Trust and intended, after a period of time, to operate without public subsidy. The deal sweetener is a proposed £86 million grant for overdue property maintenance, a longstanding drain on EH's ever-diminishing budget. The other part of EH, the one that advises planning authorities and the Secretary of State and discharges statutory requirements, will remain as an NDPB, and probably be called something more descriptive and without the cultural baggage and Thatcherite legacy conveyed by the name of the parent body.

Thurley knew this reorganisation was coming and so took the opportunity to use this book to position the new, property-owning charity. *Men from the Ministry* is a retrospective manifesto, a justification and celebration. It also reads a little like a long overdue farewell to Thurley's paymasters, who have consistently, one senses, been a disappointment to him. None of the successive governments he has served has really ever truly valued heritage, or so the reader is left feeling. That said, the Left advanced the cause of heritage far more than the Right. Conservatives over more than a century have seen the men from the ministry as a threat to private property rights. An Englishman's home is not his castle when the civil servants come to call. Some may now reflect that New Labour actually increased English Heritage's status in the planning system. The present Coalition's new planning framework, by contrast, is pro-growth.

Thurley's score settlements make the book lopsided. The saving of Britain's heritage lies, on his telling, in the collecting of properties and land. However, and as a matter of fact, the larger part of Britain's man-made heritage is saved by the public. Statute and the planning system require the conservation of property if it is listed, scheduled, in a conservation area, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or a National Park. And this is done under the watchful eyes of democratically elected planning authorities staffed by the councillors elected to represent the public's interests. They are advised by their own specialists, in turn assisted and supported by specialist planners working in the statutory part of English Heritage. The National Building Collection is a great asset, of course, but it comprises the smallest fraction of the total historic environment.

And why call it a collection or compare it to a museum? 'Collecting' is based on connoisseurship and it is the preserve of an elite, one committed to public service, yes, but an elite nonetheless. Thurley has made those proxy property owners into the saviours of our heritage. There is relatively little about what the planning system achieves day in and day out. The voluntary sector comes off better. The book's real purpose, however, is to chart a lineage from Peers to Thurley himself, who will probably remain the head of a reformed English Heritage.

### Koretsky: The Soviet Poster: 1930–1984.

By Erica Wolf. 428 pp. incl. 232 col. ills.  
(New Press, London, 2012), £28.99.  
ISBN 978-1-59558-542-4.

Reviewed by CHRISTINA LODDER

THE GRAPHIC WORK of Russian avant-garde figures such as Aleksandr Rodchenko, Gustavs Klucis and El Lissitzky is well known and justly celebrated. Less familiar is the name of Viktor Koretsky, who was slightly younger than these artists, having been born in 1909, but who worked consistently on the production of propaganda posters for the Communist regime from the early 1930s onwards. His first works, which coincided with the First Five-Year Plan were strongly influenced by the photomontage techniques of Klucis and John Heartfield, which he adapted to the political and cultural requirements of Socialist Realism, the official aesthetic in the Soviet Union after 1932. In his hands, the technique of photomontage survived, not as a modernist medium but as an important and effective propaganda tool, which gained official approval. Although he became a target for attack in the final years of Stalin's regime, he managed to survive and continued working during the Thaw and Perestroika, only retiring in 1991 when the Soviet Union ceased to exist. He then devoted himself to painting